

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, FINANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY



OPENING STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN TODD RUSSELL PLATTS
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In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Army National Guard began to mobilize soldiers in support of the Global War on Terror. As part of Operations Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom, these soldiers fought the Taliban and al Qaeda throughout Asia and Africa. They continue to guard prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and perform support missions here in the U.S. Similarly, National Guard soldiers served on the front lines in Iraq and are now assisting in peace-keeping and reconstruction operations in Iraq under Operation Iraqi Freedom.

This is the largest mobilization of Guard troops since World War II. Over the past two years, the House Government Reform Committee, the Government Accountability Office, and the Department of Defense have worked together to ensure that this large-scale deployment goes as smoothly as possible. In a series of hearings supplemented by ongoing quarterly briefings, civil servants and military personnel have worked closely with Committee staff and GAO auditors to bring improvements to the systems and processes that serve our troops. Among the issues that have been addressed are errors in soldiers' pay, ineffective tracking of supplies, and problems with treatment of injured Guard and Reserve soldiers. This hearing will look at the process for reimbursing Guard soldiers for their travel and *per diem* expenses. It is an important part of the ongoing productive collaboration that has resulted in a number of improvements.

Specifically, the Subcommittee will discuss the findings of GAO's recent case studies on travel reimbursement procedures for National Guard troops. This report, which will be released today, found that a number of deployed National Guard soldiers experienced problems receiving appropriate travel and *per diem* reimbursement.

In light of our heavy reliance on Guard and Reserve troops to win the Global War on Terror, it is imperative that travel reimbursement and other management issues be resolved and that our uniformed personnel be informed of the extensive work that has been done and continues to be done to address any problems.

I would like to thank our witnesses not only for being here today but for working with the Committee over the past two years. First will hear from Mr. Pat Shine, the Director of Military and Civilian Pay at the Defense Finance and Accounting Service. Mr. Shine, I appreciate your hosting my staff in Indianapolis last summer and your help in resolving a pay issue with one of the Guard units from my district. Mr. Roy Wallace, the Director of Plans and Resources for the Department of the Army, and Mr. John Argodale, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial operations will follow Mr. Shine. Mr. Greg Kutz of the Government Accountability Office will conclude the panel. Again, thank you for agreeing to be here today. I look forward to your testimonies.